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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KWMN](#) [KMPI](#) [SA](#)  
SUBJECT: NO WOMEN AMONG SAG APPOINTEES TO EP CHAMBER OF  
COMMERCE

REF: A. RIYADH 1197

[1](#)B. RIYADH 963

[1](#)1. (SBU) The Ministry of Commerce and Industry announced on March 1 its six appointees to the board of the Eastern Province (EP) Chamber of Commerce & Industry (EPCCI): Nasr Al-Hajry; Ghasan Al-Nimr (a Shi'a; also a member of the Ta'awun slate); Halal Al-Twerki (a cousin of Minister Naimi's chief of staff); Mohamed Al-Faraj; Fahd Al-Sheri' (a member of the Itihad Al-Sharqiyya slate); and Rashid Al-Hossan. Although women were permitted to run as candidates and vote for the first time in the recent elections (reftels), the SAG did not appoint any women to the board. Several of our contacts thought it likely, and had been hopeful, that the ministry would appoint at least one woman to the board if none were elected. Hana Al-Zuhair, Director of the Businesswomen's Center at the EPCCI, expressed her disappointment with the decision: "We were so sorry (to hear the news). What's the difference between the EP and Jeddah? I think there was pressure on the ministry from men; the ministry had said they would appoint women. Anyway, in the future we will do better."

[1](#)2. (SBU) Comment: The SAG's decision not to appoint a woman to the EPCCI board is an opportunity lost. Two women were elected to the board of the Jeddah Chamber of Commerce & Industry and two were appointed; with no seats on the EPCCI board, women will face a more uphill struggle in the EP to broaden their opportunities in the business world. We would not be surprised if leading EP businessmen, and particularly the election winners, had asked the ministry not to appoint any women to the board. Their interests lie more in preserving the status quo, as good as it is for their businesses, than in supporting social change. End comment.

(APPROVED: SPEIDEL)  
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